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## JOHN 20 : 27 AND OUR FUTURE BODIES.

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All that took place between the Resurrection of Christ and his Ascension is full of interest, and nothing is more full of comfort than the record of his dealings with Thomas. At the close of the day when he had risen from the dead, his disciples gathered together full of eager excitement, for some had reported that his body was not in the tomb, and others that they had seen him, and that he had sent messages to the rest, and to Peter in particular. So they met to talk it all over, and sift out the truth. Then, to prevent interruption by their enemies they shut the doors and no doubt fastened them securely besides, and while thus assembled, listening to and comparing the various reports, suddenly, Jesus himself stood in the midst of the eager group. It is not said that he opened the door, or even stepped forward, only there he stood, and his well known voice once more said "Peace be with you." Then well knowing what was needed to relieve their doubts, he showed them his hands, his feet and his side, bearing the marks of the wounds wherewith he had been wounded for our transgressions. More important than even that, he imparted to them the gift of the Holy Spirit, and said to them, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Thomas however was not with them to receive the comfort which he needed so much, and when they told him all that they had seen and heard on that memorable evening, he found his own sadness so hopelessly out of sympathy with their gladness, that in the depth of his distress he cried, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

On the next Lord's day—as they already began to call it—Jesus again appears among them. This time they were all present. Thomas driven by the anguish of his own spirit, and drawn by what he had heard, came longing and yet

hardly hoping that he also might see the Lord. And there again Jesus stands not very plainly visible, but with his eye on his discouraged follower, and without giving him time to speak, saying, "Reach hither thy finger and see my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." Some frigidly interpret this as a declaration that Thomas was destitute of all faith. Is it not more true to nature, and especially to the gentleness of Christ, who had come especially to comfort his desponding follower to say that he emphasises his distress, that the joy of his deliverance may be the greater. So we are impressed more than ever with the compassion which Christ feels for the honest perplexities of each one of his people through all the ages, and are sweetly drawn to tell him our distresses, be they what they may,—a feeling not chilled at all by the blessing he pronounces on those who have not seen, and yet have believed.

The thoughts of some however in reading these words of Christ to Thomas move in a different direction, for, accustomed to look on his resurrection body as the pattern of the body that shall be theirs hereafter, they are thinking:—If in that body of his glory wounds remain as they were made here on earth, what is to hinder that our deformities shall not also survive the grave? and blemishes of all sorts reappear in heaven?

This is a real difficulty, not to be removed by the general argument that if our sins are washed whiter than snow much more will our bodies be free from all defects; for they are to be "conformed to the body of his glory" and here that is represented as retaining the marks of its earthly wounds. Nor will it do to say, that it is not the body of Christ as seen by his disciples on earth after his resurrection, but his body as it now appears on the throne, that is to be the pattern for ours, for the same disciple that records the words of Christ to Thomas, also tells us that he saw "in the midst of the throne—a Lamb standing as though it had been slain" (Rev. 5, 6).

Some might reason however that the wounds that would naturally appear fresh so soon after death, might become in

heaven only a faint scar in no way repulsive but only a memorial of what has been, but may we speak of natural appearance in a matter which is confessedly supernatural?

Others may find relief in the thought that as the glory of Christ requires some visible memorial of his death, the marks of his wounds which constitute that memorial may be a notable exception to the otherwise universal rule that obliterates all the bodily imperfections and deformities of the redeemed. That may be so, but the question is, what proof is there that such is the fact?

A careful examination of the written record may show that the difficulty is not so great as at first sight it seemed to be. Moreover we may find also some things looking in the direction of the exceptional nature of these marks of the wounds of our Redeemer.

It is not written that Thomas "put his finger into the print of the nails," much less that he put his hand into the open side of the Saviour. Commentators agree with great unanimity that the sight of Christ and his gracious words offering to submit to the test demanded by his disciple, at once delivered him from all his troubles without that test. That expression "*thrust thy hand into*" is a most unfortunate rendering of the same verb rendered *put*, etc. in the previous clause, and with good reason it is corrected in the new revision, and even the preposition *eis* here rendered "into" means also "to, up to, as far as, and upon," and so laying the hand upon the scar of the healed wound would meet every requirement of the context, and thus understood, it is not only relieved from any unpleasant association, but while the desirableness of some visible memorial of the wounds wherewith Christ was wounded for our transgressions calls for an exception to the general rule, we are very sure that there is no corresponding desirableness for the continuance of any bodily defect or deformity in us that would open a way for the perpetuation of any bodily imperfection in heaven.

Another argument may at least be worthy of consideration. The body of Christ after his resurrection was gifted with what men would call inconsistent and even conflicting prop-

erties. It could be handled at one time (Luke 24 : 39) and yet at another it rose above the clouds. It could appear inside of closed doors, apparently without passing through them, and yet immediately after, it had flesh and bones and ate part of a broiled fish, (verse 42). May it not have been also true that the visibility of the marks of his wounds varied with the needs of the moment? On the evening after his resurrection they were visible. At a previous hour of that same day, when he appeared in another form (Mark 16 : 12) they were not to be seen, for had Cleopas and his companion seen them would they not have recognized him long before they did? and if those marks had been there, during that long and animated discussion, carried on with abundant oriental gesticulation, when those sacred hands were seen in all positions, and at every angle of vision, could they have failed to see them? Or would Mary Magdalene have failed to speak of them had they been visible when she stooped to clasp those blessed feet, and those no less blessed hands were stretched forth in deprecation of her intended homage?

Any one of these things taken alone may fail to satisfy some minds. One man will be moved more by one of them, and another by another, but take them all together and we see no occasion for anxiety lest the marks of the wounds on the resurrection body of the Redeemer involve the perpetuation of any deformities or blemishes in the bodies of the Redeemed in heaven.